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ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE SIXTH CONFERENCE

Report of Japan

Paper submitted by Japan

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1. The Standardization of Geographical Names of Japan

Although the actual number is uncertain, it is said that there are over 10 million geographical names used in daily life in Japan. The collection, arrangement and standardization of these geographical names will not only promote economic and social activity but also be of great value for the preservation of our culture.

However, no single government organization specially responsible for conducting centralized collection, arrangement and standardization of these geographical names has been set aside by law in Japan. Each of the various organizations which do work related to geographical names, however, has the furthering of the collection and standardization of geographical names as part of their responsibilities, and they are conducting coordinated toponymic standardization in a collective manner.

(1) The Standardization of Geographical Names of Populated Areas

In Japan, the geographical names of populated areas in the cities (shi), towns (cho, machi), and villages (son, mura) are managed officially, according to the laws which have been laid down. Within each of these municipalities, the geographical names of the populated areas are hierarchically subdivided into divisions (cho), blocks (cho-me), village divisions (oaza) and village blocks (aza), so that there is no confusion regarding the corresponding boundaries or differences in the inscriptions or phonetic representations of these names.

(2) The Standardization of Natural Geographical Names like the Names of Mountains

In order to standardize the names of natural geographical features which appear on maps, the Geographical Survey Institute (GSI), the governmental agency which prepares land maps, and the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency, which prepares hydrographic maps, established the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1960, and this committee meets once or twice every year in order to work on the standardization of these geographical names.

The Geographical Survey Institute also established the Committee on Mountain Height to work on the standardization of mountain names, and from 1988 to 1991 this committee, consisted of learned and experienced specialists, collected and organized the names of 1,003 mountains and published these results in its "Synoptic Table of Mountain Heights".

(3) Determination of Geographical Names of Undersea Features

Geographical names of undersea features which have been discovered and surveyed in and around Japanese waters by Japanese oceanographic research institutions and other organizations concerned are officially named by the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency, based on the recommendations made by an Advisory Board on Geographical Names in Oceans and Seas, composed of oceanographers and other scientific authorities of related governments, academic organizations and institutions.
These recommendations are based on the Guidelines contained in the Standardization of Undersea Feature Names prepared through collaboration between the GEBCO Sub-Committee on Geographical Names and Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features hand the Working Group on Maritime and Undersea Features of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

Since the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in 1992, 153 undersea features (85 seamounts, 19 undersea knolls 5 submarine canyons, 4 undersea basins, and 40 other features) have been proposed and adopted by the Advisory Board and the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency, Japan. To date, a total of 1,212 undersea feature names have been determined.

(4) The Determination of Antarctic Geographical Names

The specific points and topographical features that have been discovered or surveyed by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition (JARE) team or vessels and aircrafts which has engaged in it are officially named by the Headquarters for JARE based on the "Rules for the Naming of Antarctic Geographical Features", where the National Institute of Polar Research prepares the proposals based on a report by the Antarctic Geographical Names Committee.

Up until the present time, the names of 313 of these geographical features have been determined, and the names of 22 of these features have been determined since the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992.

2. The Preparation Of The National Geographical Names Gazetteer

The preparation of the National Geographical Names Gazetteer, based on the resolutions made by the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, has been finalized in 1997

containing some 5200 geographical names. The preparatory work was led by the Geographical Survey Institute by collecting and recording the geographical names from those which appear in the 1:1,000,000-scale international maps and the 1:1,000,000-scale ocean floor topographical maps. The Geographical Survey Institute took charge for those on land and the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency did for oceanographical names in coordination of both institutes and consultation with all the government agencies.